

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
390 North Robert Street, St. Paul, MN 55101
Phone (651) 602-1000 TDD (651) 291-0904

DATE: December 18, 2007

TO: Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

FROM: Jan Youngquist, Senior Planner-Parks (651) 602-1029

SUBJECT: (2008-1) Central Anoka County Regional Trail—East Alignment Master Plan and Request for Reimbursement Consideration in 2008-09 CIP, Anoka County (Referral No. 20140-1)

INTRODUCTION

Anoka County has submitted a master plan for the Central Anoka County Regional Trail East Alignment for Metropolitan Council review and approval. The County plans to begin development of the trail in 2008, and has requested that the Metropolitan Council consider reimbursing the County in the 2008-09 CIP for funds it spends on development.

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* (Chapter 2 – Policies and Strategies, Section D – Planning, Strategy 4A- Master Plans), describes the role of the master plan in the regional park system. The policy requires that any project proposed for funding in the Metropolitan Regional Parks Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) be consistent with a Metropolitan Council approved regional park master plan.

This memorandum contains a review of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail East Alignment Master Plan based on its consistency with the *2030 Parks Policy Plan*, as well as a review of the request for reimbursement authorization under applicable terms in Strategy 2(f) and recommends approval of both the master plan and the reimbursement request.

AUTHORITY TO REVIEW

Minnesota Statute 473.313, Subdivision 1 requires Regional Park Implementing Agencies to “prepare, after consultation with all affected municipalities, and submit to the Metropolitan Council, and from time to time revise and resubmit to the council, a master plan and annual budget for the acquisition and development of regional recreation open space located within the district or county, consistent with the council’s policy plan.” (i.e., the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*)

Minnesota Statute 473.313, Subdivision 2 authorizes the Metropolitan Council to review, with the advice of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, master plans for the regional park system. Plans are reviewed for their consistency with the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policy plans. If a master plan is not consistent with Council policy, the Council should return the plan to the implementing agency with its comments for revision and resubmittal.

Minnesota Statute Section 473.315 authorizes the “Metropolitan Council with the advice of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to make grants from any funds available to it for recreation open space purposes to any municipality, park district or county located wholly or partially

within the metropolitan area to cover the cost, or any portion of the cost, of acquiring or developing regional recreation open space in accordance with the [Regional Recreation Open Space] Policy Plan”.

BACKGROUND

The Central Anoka County Regional Trail will connect the planned Mississippi West Regional Park to Bunker Hills Regional Park and the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve. From there, it will continue on to the Washington County border, where there will be an opportunity to connect with the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail. The trail will also provide connections to the several Anoka County regional trails, including the Mississippi River Regional Trail, the Rum River Regional Trail, the Coon Creek Regional Trail, the East Anoka County Regional Trail and the Chain of Lakes-Bald Eagle Regional Trail. The trail corridor will traverse the communities of Ramsey, Anoka, Andover, Ham Lake, Blaine, Lino Lakes and Centerville.

Once developed, the total length of the trail will be approximately 18 miles. Currently, there are three miles of existing paved off-street trail within the cities of Ramsey and Andover. This master plan for the east alignment addresses the nine miles of the trail from Lexington Avenue (CSAH 17) east to the Washington County border, in the cities of Blaine, Lino Lakes and Centerville. The Central Anoka County Regional Trail Corridor Master Plan, which was approved by the Metropolitan Council in 1999, planned for the remaining six miles of the trail corridor. Figure 1 illustrates the entire Central Anoka County Regional Trail corridor. Figure 2 shows the east alignment of the trail, which is the subject of this master plan.

Figure 1— Central Anoka County Regional Trail —Anoka County

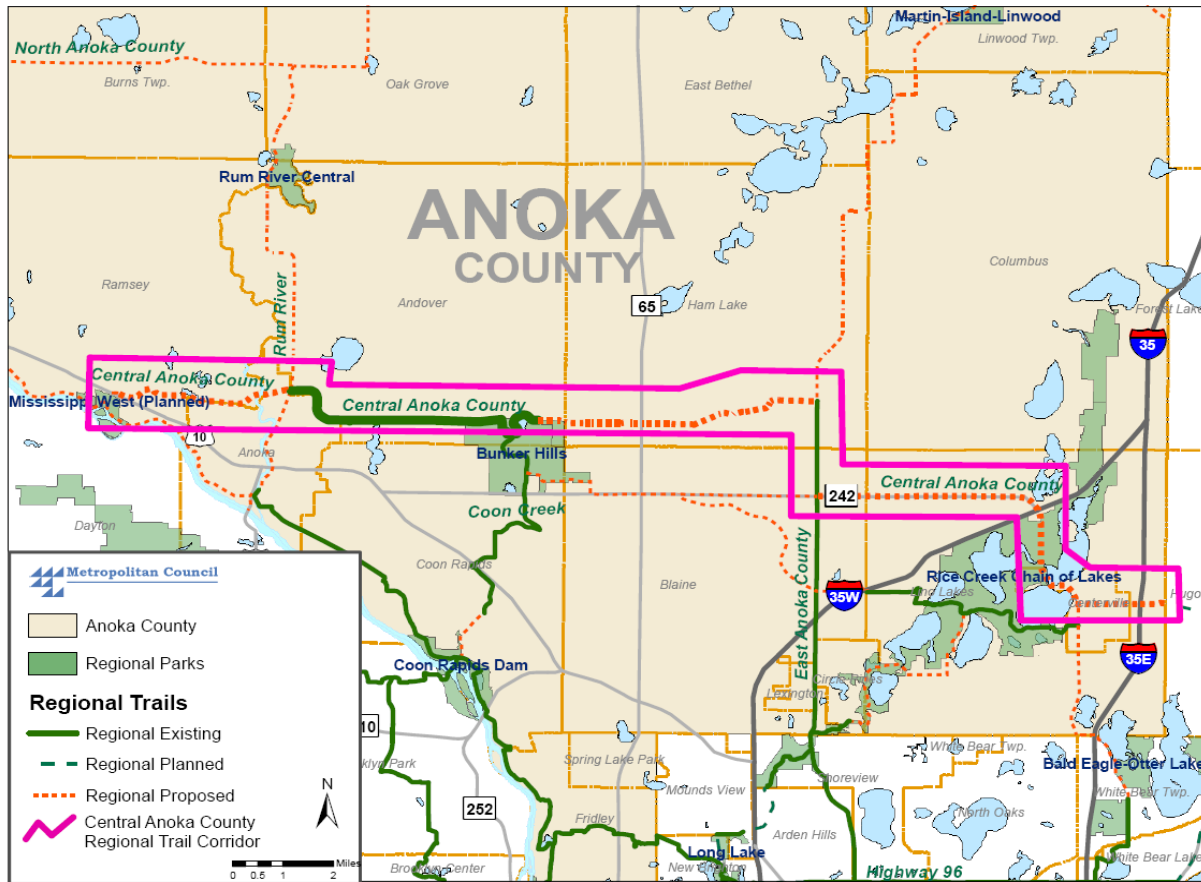
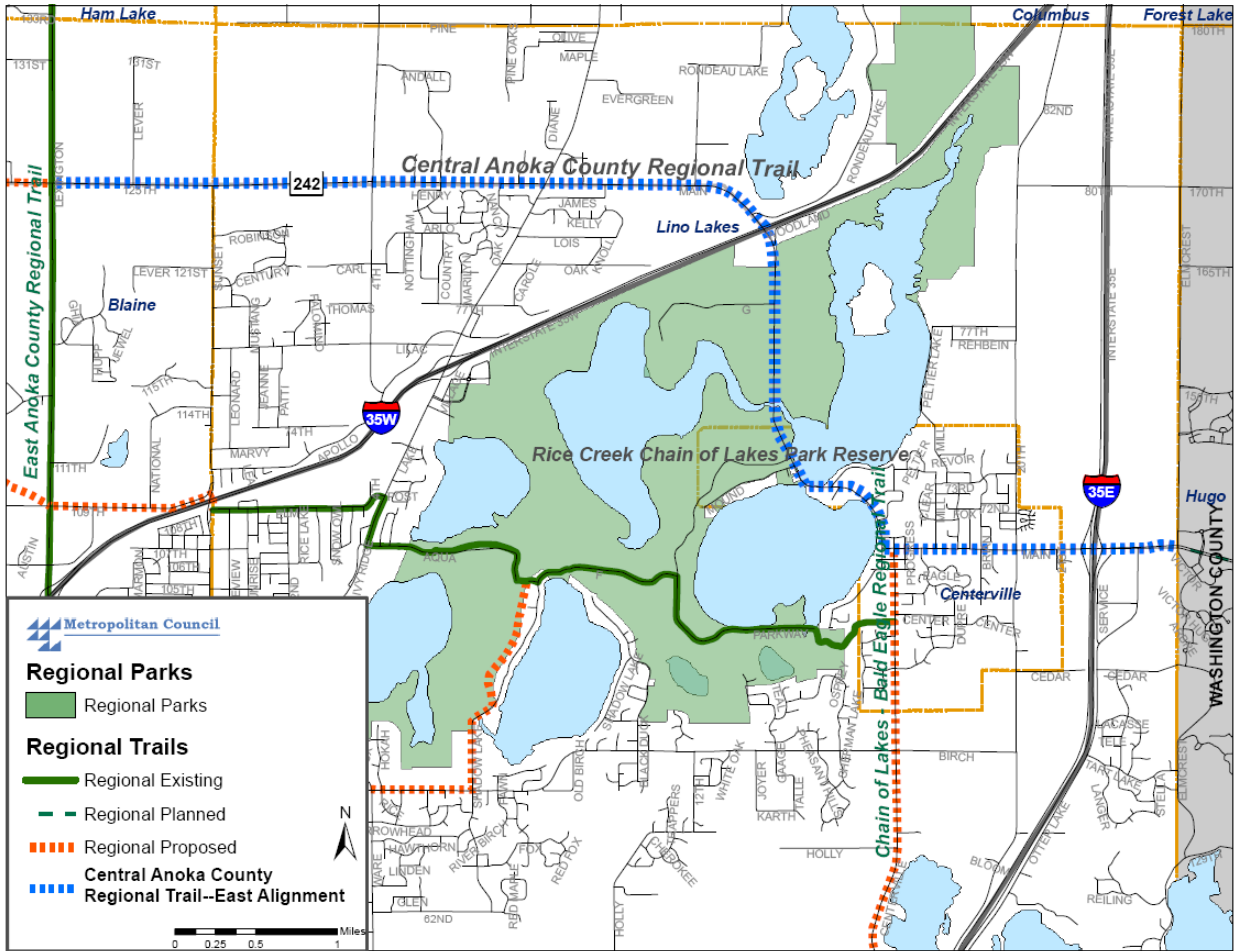


Figure 2— Central Anoka County Regional Trail –East Alignment



Anoka County plans to begin construction on a two mile segment of the trail through Centerville in 2008. The estimated cost of the project is \$250,000. The City of Centerville has provided \$125,000 as a local match to the amount Anoka County will finance.

MASTER PLAN REVIEW ANALYSIS

1. Boundaries and Acquisition Costs

The boundaries for the east alignment of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail-East Alignment allow for an off-street trail that begins at Lexington Avenue (CSAH 17) in Blaine, following on the south side of Main Street (CSAH 14) through Lino Lakes and Centerville to the Washington County border.

The first four-mile segment of the trail corridor in Blaine and Lino Lakes traverses through agricultural fields, pastures, wetlands, wooded areas, open sod farms and through a residential/school area. The trail will then cross the Interstate 35W bridge. This overpass is currently a narrow two lane bridge which does not allow for safe pedestrian passage. The Anoka County Highway Department is planning to reconstruct the bridge in the future, with the trail included in the plans. The trail will then continue on to the Rice

Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve, where it will pass through wetlands and woodlands, crossing Rice Creek and then enter into Centerville. This segment of the trail will still be off-street, but due to tight right-of-way boundaries, a portion of it will be adjacent to the road curb. The trail will then cross Interstate 35E and continue on to the Washington County border. The interchange of I-35E and Main Street (CSAH 14) is scheduled to be reconstructed in the future and plans for the trail should be included in the reconstruction.

The trail corridor is proposed to be constructed in Anoka County right-of-way or on County property; therefore no acquisition costs are anticipated for this segment of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail.

2. Stewardship Plan

Anoka County Parks and Recreation is a natural resources based system. Along the Central Anoka County Regional Trail, the County will provide for:

- The protection, restoration and enhancement of plant and animal habitats throughout the corridor
- Protection and improvement of water and soil resources
- An increased public awareness of the diverse natural resources
- Encouragement of green and open spaces along the trail corridor where possible to enhance the recreational benefits to the community

The trail will traverse the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Parks Reserve, which is a prime management and stewardship area. The park reserve is one of the largest in the regional system and contains some of the most significant native wildlife habitat and water resources in the region—including lakes, wetlands, prairie and woodlands.

Management and stewardship practices for maintenance along the corridor will include regular inspections; sweeping; debris removal; cleaning; mowing; snow and ice removal; bituminous repair; turf, brush and tree maintenance; shouldering if necessary; sign inspection and repair or replacement; and maintenance and repair of overlooks, observation decks and amenities along the trail corridor.

3. Needs Analysis

Regional parks and trails in the greater metropolitan area are very popular; therefore, the demand for regional trails is anticipated to increase as the population grows. The population of Anoka County has been growing steadily and is predicted to grow 38 percent in the next 25 years. Along the trail corridor, the population of Lino Lakes is projected to almost double in population from 2000 to 2030, and the population of Blaine is projected to increase by almost 75 percent.

Figure 3—Population Forecasts*

Year	City of Blaine	City of Centerville	City of Lino Lakes
2000	45,014	3,202	16,791
2010	64,800	3,700	23,700
2020	76,100	4,100	27,500
2030	78,000	4,700	31,300

**Metropolitan Council 2030 Regional Development Framework—Revised Forecasts, January 3, 2007*

According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' *2004 Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey*, nearly 82 percent of Minnesotans surveyed indicated that outdoor recreation is "very important" or "moderately important" in their lives. Popular trail activities include walking, hiking, biking, running, jogging and inline skating.

The estimated recreational visits to regional parks and trails in Anoka County have increased by 60 percent from 1995 to 2005. The future population growth anticipated for the County, along with the increase in regional park and trail use, will most likely increase the demand for additional facilities.

4. Development

The Central Anoka County Regional Trail East Alignment will be a corridor with a 10-foot wide bituminous surface trail for use by pedestrians, bicyclists and inline skaters, which provides connections to other regional parks and trails. The trail is proposed to be completely off-street, but due to a few existing road widths and right-of-way restrictions, a small portion of the trail will be immediately adjacent to the road curb.

The typical trail section will include a minimum 2 foot wide shoulder on each side of the 10 foot wide trail, with grades not exceeding 5 percent. The shoulder is recommended to be within the street or trail right-of-way for maintenance purposes. The trail will be located between 0 to 50 feet from the back of the curb; however, a preferred minimum distance would be five to seven feet.

Figure 4 shows estimated construction costs for the trail. Total master plan development costs are approximately \$1,600,000—or \$33.67 per linear foot.

Figure 4—Estimated Development Costs

Description	Estimated Costs
Bituminous trail construction	\$1,190,000
Clearing and grubbing	\$40,000
Utility relocation	\$20,000
Landscaping and restoration	\$40,000
Signage and striping	\$10,000
Design/Engineering	\$150,000
Contingency	\$150,000
Total Estimated Cost = \$33.67 per LF	\$1,600,000

5. Conflicts

Anoka County will work to keep conflicts regarding this trail to a minimum through proper planning and community involvement. Common concerns among residents that live adjacent to the trail include the effect the trail will have on their safety, security and privacy. Generally, regional trails in the metropolitan area do not have high criminal activities related to trail use. Anoka County will work to minimize the impacts to the residents' privacy through vegetative screens or shifting the trail where possible. The best methods to address these issues will be determined by Anoka County and the affected residents.

Conflicts between pedestrian trail users and vehicular traffic will be kept to a minimum. Where conflicts cannot be avoided, pavement striping of the crosswalks or the trail will be used. Signage along the trail will alert trail users to areas of potential conflict, such as street crossings, driveway crossings and pedestrian cross-traffic. In the areas where the trail is in close proximity to Main Street (CSAH 14), additional screening and buffering will be used to enhance the safety and aesthetic quality of the trail.

6. Public Services

Public services are provided at points along the trail corridor. Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve has facilities for trail users, such as parking, restrooms, drinking fountains and benches. Limited services are also available at retail establishments near Lexington Avenue (CSAH 17) in Blaine, Lake Drive (CSAH 23) in downtown Centerville and near 20th Street in Lino Lakes. Additional public services will be incorporated as trail development occurs.

7. Operations

Anoka County Ordinance #2000-1 regulates parks and trails and will be enforced by the local police departments and the Anoka County Sheriff.

The local government agencies will be responsible for providing daily and general routine maintenance of the trail within their jurisdiction. Anoka County will be responsible for the daily and general routine maintenance of the trail within Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve. These maintenance activities include mowing, sweeping, plowing, clearing and debris removal. Solid waste, such as litter and trash, will be removed from along the trail at regular intervals by the local agencies.

Anoka County will inspect the trail annually and will provide required long-term maintenance. Trail signage will be provided and maintained by the County. Annual maintenance costs for the trail are estimated to be approximately \$10,000, which includes funds for sign replacement, minor bituminous repair and crack sealing.

Revenue for the operation and maintenance of this trail will come from the Anoka County Parks and Recreation annual operations and maintenance budget with supplementary funding coming from the Metropolitan Council's regional operations and maintenance grant program.

8. Citizen Participation

Anoka County worked with the Cities of Blaine, Centerville and Lino Lakes throughout the master planning process. The regional trail was discussed at Parks and Recreation Committee or Advisory Committee meetings as well as at City Council and County Board meetings. Additionally, an open house was held on October 17, 2007 to inform the public and answer questions regarding the trail. No comments were received and no issues were raised.

The Anoka County Board and the Cities of Centerville and Lino Lakes passed resolutions supporting development of the trail. The City of Blaine has issued a letter of support and is scheduled to consider the issue at an upcoming City Council meeting.

9. Public Awareness

The proposed corridor was outlined in the Anoka County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive System Plan, which was adopted by the County Board in July 2006. Once the trail is complete, the Anoka County Parks and Recreation Department will provide information to the public through its website, as well as through the distribution of maps, publications and brochures.

10. Special Needs

Anoka County strives to provide equal access to its parks and trails. No fees are collected for trail use. The Anoka County "Traveler" provides transportation services for a minimal fee to County citizens who are in need.

The trail and its access points will meet guidelines set by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The trail will be built with grades required for accessibility and curb ramps will be built at all locations where the trail crosses a curb.

11. Natural Resources

Anoka County's Natural Resources Unit will be involved in the design, construction and monitoring of the trail development project. An emphasis will be placed on avoiding and minimizing any adverse impacts to the plant and animal habitat as well as to the overall watershed. The County will focus on incorporating local native seed and plant material that will complement the ecology and function of the surrounding native plant communities.

Protection of surface and ground water resources are a top priority for the project. Anoka County will work closely with the Cities of Blaine, Centerville and Lino Lakes, the Rice Creek Watershed District, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Metropolitan Council to ensure that the standard and requirements for resource protection are consistent with the Council's model ordinance for storm water management.

Vegetation management along the trail corridor will focus on preserving native plants, introducing local native plants, maintaining water quality within the watershed and providing for linear plant and wildlife corridor connections. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' *Guidelines for Managing and Restoring Natural Plant Communities Along Trails and Waterways* reference will be used as part of the long term management plan for the trail corridor.

REVIEW BY OTHER COUNCIL DIVISIONS:

Community Development – Environment, Surface Water Management (Jim Larsen) - No impacts

Environmental Services – Sewers (Roger Janzig) – No impacts

Transportation (James Andrew) – Transportation staff offers the following advisory comments:

1. Under Section VI. Conflicts, it would be helpful to have a description of how intersections will be treated to ensure that vegetation and other visual obstruction will be cleared to maintain clear sightlines of bicyclists and in-line skaters that may be approaching more quickly or from different directions than drivers may anticipate. While it can be beneficial to have the additional screening

and buffering mentioned for CSAH 14/Main Street, this screening should not be near intersections with roadways and driveways.

Anoka County Response:

It is standard practice in Anoka County to keep sightlines at intersections clear of all obstructions for drivers, bicyclists, in-line skaters and walkers. Any vegetative screening between the trail and CSAH 14/Main Street would be installed only where it will not impede sightlines for drivers and trail users at intersections. In addition, warning signs can be installed prior to intersections and trail/road crossings to notify both vehicular drivers and trail users of the upcoming crossing.

2. The plan mentions that crosswalk striping will be provided at intersections but greater mitigation, such as installation of median refuge islands, should also be planned for at intersections with higher volume roads.

Anoka County Response:

Anoka County will work with the local jurisdictions to install median refuge islands at trail crossings on higher volume roads where possible.

REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST ANALYSIS

Anoka County has requested that up to \$125,000 of projected expenses related to the construction of a 2 mile segment of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail-East Alignment be declared eligible for reimbursement consideration in the 2008-09 regional parks CIP. In order to qualify for this CIP funding, the master plan and the request for reimbursement consideration must be approved by the Metropolitan Council.

Figure 5 illustrates the estimated costs and revenue sources for the trail construction project:

Figure 5—Costs and Revenue Sources for Trail Segment Construction

Costs and Revenue Sources for construction of a segment of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail	
Costs	
Estimated construction costs for a bituminous 2 mile segment of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail that follows Main Street (CSAH 14) through the City of Centerville	\$250,000
Revenues	
Local match from the City of Centerville	\$125,000
Funding Gap to be initially financed by Anoka County. This is the amount Anoka County requests to be eligible for reimbursement consideration by the Metropolitan Council in the 2008-09 Regional Parks CIP	\$125,000

Strategy 2(f) of the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan states:

Strategy 2(f): Reimbursement

Reimbursement will be considered for development provided the project in question is consistent in timing, scale, type and cost with an approved master plan, that all information required for a development grant is submitted to the Council prior to the regional park implementing agency undertaking the project and that the Council approves the project.

This project is consistent with the terms of Strategy 2(f) for the following reasons:

1. The timing, scale and cost of the project are consistent with the master plan being concurrently recommended for approval by the Metropolitan Council.
2. Sufficient information has been submitted in this request regarding what would be financed with a Council grant to meet the requirements of Strategy 2(f).
3. Anoka County is requesting Metropolitan Council approval prior to beginning construction.

Anoka County has prioritized this trail development as fifth of its five projects identified in the 2008-09 regional parks CIP. The amount of the State appropriation for the CIP has yet to be determined by the Legislature. The remainder of the CIP will be funded with Metropolitan Council bonds as a 40 percent match to the State funds. Since the total amount of CIP funding is unknown at this time, there is no guarantee that this reimbursement will be funded in the 2008-09 capital improvement program.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that master plans include information on eleven items reviewed in the “analysis section” above. It also requires that sufficient information be included on the estimated cost of the acquisition and development proposed in the master plan. This review concludes that the Central Anoka County Regional Trail East Alignment Master Plan (Referral No. 20140-1) contains sufficient information to meet the requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and that it is generally consistent with the requirements of the plan.
2. The estimated cost to implement the master plan is \$1,600,000 in 2007 dollars.
3. Approval of this master plan does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. Future development funding based on this master plan would be done through the regional parks capital improvement program (CIP).
4. The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that requests for CIP reimbursement are consistent with the terms of Strategy 2(f). This review concludes that the reimbursement request for up to \$125,000 for the capital construction of a segment of the trail outlined in the Central Anoka County Regional Trail—East Alignment master plan is consistent with the terms of Strategy 2(f) of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. However, the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that reimbursement will be granted, and expenditure of local funds never entitles a park agency to reimbursement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Central Anoka County Regional Trail—East Alignment Master Plan (Referral No. 20140-1).
2. Approve the request to consider reimbursing Anoka County up to \$125,000 in the 2008-09 regional parks capital improvement program for the construction of a portion of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail-East Alignment. However, the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that reimbursement will be granted, and expenditure of local funds never entitles a park agency to reimbursement.